

Aim for Perfection

by David Alsobrook

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"Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you."

(2 Corinthians 13:11, NIV)

Contents

Special Notice

The subject of holiness has long been a controversial subject in the church at large. In the past six years this small volume has sometimes added to that controversy.

The issue of sin in the believer is an important one. Surely, no Christian can look at this issue lightly, as our eternal position with Christ will be affected with regards to our personal victory, or the lack of it.

Having said this, however, let me hasten to add that there has been the misimpression that I believe in and teach the doctrine of sinless perfection. I do not teach that total sinless perfection is presently obtained by the majority of Christians. I have fallen short of the mark and so have those whom I know. What I am saying, in this book, is that sinlessness should be our goal, our aim, our chief desire.

Otherwise, who can say we are desiring to be like our Heavenly Father who is holy in all His ways? As He is holy, so are we to be holy. If we are not holy as He is holy (and we have not been) then we are to desire to be partakers of His holiness to a larger degree until as He is so are we in this world.

The accuser of the brethren has been faithful to perform his duties of condemnation and guilt over those sincere believers who have read this message and have been overcome with their faults and failures. Such is not the intent of this author, nor the intent of the Author of our salvation.

His Word, some of which is presented herein, is full of exhortations and commands to put off the old man and

present our members as instruments of righteousness.

But His Word is also full of mercy, pardon, encouragement, and uplifting for those who stumble, however slightly, in their walk with God. There are those whose lives appear sinless in the eyes of man, but who are still in a progressive state of sanctification, their inward parts still needing change. There may be some whose love is perfected, too, who love the Lord their God with ALL their heart, and ALL their mind, with ALL their soul, and with ALL their strength. They love their neighbors as they love themselves. There may be some who have obtained the prize of the high calling of God. I do not deny it.

After all, our Father is not a trickster, who tells us to be as He is while never providing the how and the way for His children to achieve His goal.

There are some who do not desire to be more than they are. They are content with their walk. They despise this message, as Paul said they would, not realizing they are despising the Holy Spirit (I Thes. 4:7,8).

There are others who yearn for a closer, purer walk with their Father. Some of them allow the devil to discourage them with their shortcomings in the light of God's Word on sin. Be of good cheer, dear ones, for **"faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."** Will do what? Will "sanctify you wholly" and preserve your "spirit and soul and body" "entire" and "without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thes. 5:23-24).

This book is for those who desire to become all God wants them to be. Let the Holy Spirit encourage you through it.

1
The Glory of Holiness

With Egypt behind, and Pharaoh and his hosts and chariots swallowed up in the midst of the Red Sea, the children of Israel moved up on the shore. Israel, in a place of victory, and her enemies slain, burst forth with spontaneous jubilee as is recorded in Exodus, Chapter 15. This song of praise included exhortations, adulations and prophecies, many of which were not fulfilled until forty years later. Notice a portion of their praise to the Lord God: **"Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, *glorious in holiness,* fearful in praises, doing wonders"** (Exod. 15:11).

Holiness is Glorious

"Who is like thee?" What sets Yahweh apart from every other god, Israel asks.

The three chief characteristic differences between Israel's God and Egypt's idols are:

- Glorious in holiness
- Fearful in praises
- Doing wonders (miracles)

"Glorious in holiness," could be rendered "glorious *by* holiness," or "glorious *because of* holiness." It is the holiness of God that makes Him glorious. He is glorious due to His holiness. *Holiness is glorious!*

When God brings us out of our Egypt (a symbol of the

world), and we pass through the Red Sea (compares to the blood) and we stand in the Kingdom of God, we have passed from death unto life. Just as God revealed the glory of holiness a few hours after Israel's deliverance from Egypt, He wishes to reveal to the young believer the reality of a holy life early in his Christian experience.

God wants to make *us* glorious by His holiness.

> **"... Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, THAT he might present it to himself *a glorious church*"**
>
> **(Eph. 5:25-27).**

God has a people that He has redeemed. Christ loved and gave Himself for that people. Thereafter He washes and sanctifies them that He might make them glorious. The church will be glorious in the same way that God is glorious!

> **"... not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but THAT IT SHOULD BE HOLY and without blemish"**
>
> **(Eph. 5:27).**

"Not having spot." A spot pictures impurity. God erases or gets out the spots. He blots and washes out the spots. He cleanses with the washing of the water of His Word. God has made the church glorious by imparting His holiness to it.

"Nor wrinkle." Unlike a spot, a wrinkle does not represent uncleanness. Rather, it is a fold or a crease that divides the semblance of smoothness in a garment. Within the body of Christ there are many folds, creases, disunities, and divisions. But only after He washes out the spots, does He iron out the wrinkles. "Without spot" represents the

message of purity. "Without wrinkle" portrays the message of unity.

In God's Word, purity always precedes unity. Some have tried to iron out the wrinkles and have left the spots. I would rather have a dirty wrinkled shirt than a dirty ironed shirt. Some have proclaimed unity without first introducing purity. There cannot be unity without purity. A right relationship to God is the basis for a right relationship with one another. If you try to bring unity without purity all you will have is conformity.

In the Song of Solomon, Christ speaks to His bride: **"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee,"** then continues with the words: **"Come with me"** (4:7-8). If we are to "come with Him" we will have to be in the place where He can say, **"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee."** He desires us to be without impurity. He is bringing us into **"righteousness and *true* holiness"** (Ephesians 4:24).

We are to desire true holiness, holiness of truth. When Paul used the phrase "true holiness," he automatically implied not all that is called holiness is true. In the church there have been some harsh holiness teachings. Perhaps there is an aversion in some of us toward the word "holiness" because of a leaden experience in which there was an over-emphasis on external observances and religious idiosyncrasies incorrectly labeled "holiness."

All too often Christians have regarded holiness as grievous, but the Word of God says true holiness is GLORIOUS! Most of us will have to change our attitude in order to understand the true concept of holiness. **"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"** (1 John 5:3). Holiness is not grievous, but glorious!

Holiness is Beautiful

Psalm 96:9 teaches that holiness is beautiful. Here is another adjective used to describe holiness: **"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."** Holiness is beautiful in the sight of God. God is to be worshipped in holy array. There are six Scriptures in the Old Testament exhorting us to worship God in "the beauty of holiness." So, in the eyes of God, holiness is beautiful. Jesus tells us His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Holiness is not something that is drab, dull or ugly. Holiness is not burdensome, but beautiful.

Holiness is Becoming

Psalm 93:5: **"... holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."** "Becometh" means *to make attractive.* The house of God is made attractive in the sight of God by holiness. Holiness is becoming to a Christian. Holiness beautifies the Bride of Christ.

Holiness is Eternal

"Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, FOR EVER." When David wrote this psalm he specifically referred to the house of Israel, however, in the words "for ever" he included the Church. Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:5 teach that the New Testament church is the *spiritual house* of God. *Holiness is one of the few eternal characteristics* of the Kingdom of God. Long after the gifts have ceased and faith has become obsolete a holy God will be loved by a holy people.

We can see that we must form a Scriptural attitude toward holiness if we are to desire it. Repeat to yourself: HOLINESS IS GLORIOUS, BEAUTIFUL, BECOMING,

AND ETERNAL!

Holiness is a Nature

Holiness is a nature, a righteousness (practical righteousness), a behavior. Holiness is also a state of purity; it is the nature of God—the nature to which God is calling us. It is an inward call to be like Him.

To define holiness as the nature of God, let us look at the verses given in Isaiah 6:3: **"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory,"** and also Revelation 4:8: **"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."** Both verses tell us that God is holy. These two references in the Bible are the only two with the thrice uttered "Holy." Both give peculiar insight on the holiness of God as it relates to Him. Isaiah's "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord ..." refers to each personality of the Godhead: Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit. John's "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" refers to the holiness of God in all of His existence.

"Which was"—God was holy in the past.

"Which is"—He is holy in the present.

"And is to come"—He who has always been holy will always be holy.

In 1 Peter 1:16 we read: **"... Be ye holy: for I am holy."** For a long time I thought these words were yet another of the many descriptions of God (God is powerful, merciful, forgiving, etc.). Then one day it dawned on me what God means when He says, "I am holy." Holiness is not one of God's many characteristics. When we speak of holiness, we speak of God's nature. Holiness is God Himself. God is holy in absolute essence. At the very core

of God's being is absolute holiness. Unlike the many characteristics of God which reveal different aspects of His nature, holiness IS His nature. There are many things the Bible teaches that God *has;* fewer things that the Word says that God *is.* What He does comes forth from what He is. God is holy in all His nature, and therefore, righteous in all His ways. **"There is none holy as the Lord..."** (1 Sam. 2:2).

None of us by our own virtue, or natural heritage, is holy. **"There is none righteous, no, not one"** (Rom. 3:9). By our past, by our nature we are completely undone, but in Christ Jesus, we have the holiness of God imparted to our spirit, eventually working into every area of our life, making us like Him.

Called to Holiness

The Apostle Paul in Titus 2:15 is dealing with the fact that there were those who despised him for preaching holiness, yet he exhorts Titus: **"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."**

Titus 2:11-12 points out that it is the grace of God that teaches us to be holy, it's not the law.

> **"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should" [literally, MUST] "live soberly, righteously, and godly," [when?] "in this present world."**

The grace of God is a higher principle to live by than the law of God. The law of God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Jesus did not do away with the outward behavior, rather He confirmed the outward behavior and applied it to

the inner nature. He said we are not to look on a woman to lust after her. The law says, "Thou shalt not kill." Jesus said whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment (Matthew 5:22). Jesus did not do away with the outward behavior, He took it and applied it to an inward principle. He applied the principle of His commandment. He would say to us: "Don't lust and you won't commit adultery. Don't get angry and you won't kill." Jesus dealt with the nature that affects the behavior.

Our Behavior

Many Scriptures tell how God wants us to be in our behavior.

A sinner is not a sinner merely by his actions or behavior. He is a sinner by nature. True, many of his deeds are sinful; but he is only a sinner by behavior because he is a sinner by nature. In other words, he only does what he does because he is what he is, and when what he is is changed then what he does is changed. We are not holy because of what we do, we are holy because of what we are. If what we do is not being done because of what we are, then it is not true holiness. Many people adorn an outward religious standard, but this in itself is not true holiness.

God does demand outward holiness, but notice where holiness first begins: **"And I pray God your whole SPIRIT ..."** (1 Thess. 5:23)—Paul mentions the inward part of man first. 1 Samuel 16:7 teaches that the Lord looks not on the outward appearance, but He looks on the heart. That doesn't mean that God can't see your outward actions, but He begins His inspection at the heart. He judges our action by our attitude, our methods by our motives, our outward deeds by our growth into His nature. **True holiness proceeds from within and works without.** The

virtues of the inner man must show through the outer man. The outward man must show the virtues of the inner man. It is something that we do BECAUSE of what we are—holiness does affect outward behavior.

In Philippians 2:13 we read, **"For it is God which worketh in you both *to will* and *to do* of *his* good pleasure."** God works in me to desire to do His will. He works in me to will and to do His own good pleasure. He works in my nature (the inward) "to will." He works in my behavior (the outward) "to do." "To will" denotes the inner attitude. "To do" speaks of the deed.

Jesus taught that unless our holiness was an inward holiness, an outward righteous behavior would not profit us. **"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven"** (Matt. 5:20). He was saying, unless our righteous behavior comes from a holy nature within and produces the fruit as an outward growth of the hidden seed of God's nature then there is no way we can inherit His Kingdom.

Contrary to what is commonly thought about the Pharisees, Jesus DID NOT condemn them for their outward righteousness. He rebuked them because they were not doing it as a result of an inner desire. In Matthew 23:23 He gave this indictment concerning their outward living:

> **"For ye tithe mint and anise and cumin [the outward works], and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith [the inward virtues]: these [inward] *ought ye to have done and not to leave the other* [outward] *undone."***

Our outward man will *naturally* do those things that come from our inner man. True holiness is not forced religious

behavior. Right behavior should flow forth from a holy nature.

> **"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be *partakers of the divine nature,* having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"**
>
> **(2 Pet. 1:4).**

The result of partaking of the divine nature is escape from the corruption in the world. We escape the outward uncleanness because of a divine nature which has been imparted within us.

Hebrews 12:10 tells us that we can be partakers of His holiness. **"For they [our fathers] ... chastened us after their own pleasure; but he [God] for our profit, that we might be *partakers of HIS holiness."*** It is not our holiness, in fact, in Acts 3:12 Peter said, **"Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by OUR own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"** It is God's holiness is us! **"That we might be partakers of *his* holiness."**

Sanctification

"Partakers of the divine nature" and "partakers of His holiness" can be taken synonymously since we have seen that the Scriptures teach *holiness* is the *divine nature!*

This holy nature of God becomes part of us. We are partakers, associates, and companions in His divine nature. We *become* partakers of His holiness. None of us is ever holy in ourselves, we are holy through Him, by His nature working in us. This holy nature produces a change in our lives that people can see—they see the holiness of God coming forth through the natural life. This is the meaning

of the term "sanctification."

I meet some people who are afraid of the word "sanctification." In one meeting I briefly mentioned this word and a lady said to me after the service, "You know, I have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and I don't believe in sanctification. I have the baptism."

I replied, "I've been baptized in the Holy Spirit too, and I still believe in sanctification because it is in the Word of God. I may not believe it as others have told you, but I believe in it because we live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. You have to believe in sanctification if you believe in the Word of God!"

The verb SANCTIFY is twofold in meaning: "to set apart," and "to make clean." Sanctification is the PROCESS of being set apart and being made clean, and this is part of the will of God for your life. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3). It is God's will that we be separated and that we should be made clean.

We could say that sanctification is THE PROCESS BY WHICH GOD'S HOLINESS IS WORKED INTO OUR NATURE. All Christians are in a process of sanctification. We are being sanctified.

Initial sanctification begins when you are born again. When you are justified God puts His nature into your spirit, and from that time forward God begins to sanctify your soul. Our spirit *has been* sanctified; our soul *is now being* sanctified. It is the process by which God's nature becomes our nature. His nature infuses our nature, and His inner workings are manifested in our outworkings. His thoughts become our thoughts, and our ways become His ways. Behavior naturally comes into line when the inner nature is sanctified (set apart—clean—holy).

Sanctification is more than a theory, it is experiential. It is a process of being changed. You are becoming holy.

I have had experiences of sanctification in which one area of my life was consecrated and cleansed while another area of my life still proved to be out of harmony with God's nature. Israel possessed Canaan city by city, and so too our lives are purged stronghold by stronghold. Entire sanctification is our goal as expressed by Paul:

> **"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole SPIRIT and SOUL and BODY be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"**
>
> **(1 Thess. 5:23).**

The word WHOLLY means entirely or completely. The Apostle Paul was praying that the Christians at Thessalonica would be preserved blameless in spirit, soul and body right up until the Second Coming of Jesus. They were to be preserved blameless before Jesus came. Apparently they did not possess this at the time Paul was praying for them, but he was praying that they would eventually enter into it. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to pray for them in this manner, so we must assume it is God's will for us to be wholly like Him. Although this appears impossible to our natural thinking, remember: WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE!

Why would some deny that we can be made morally perfect in this present life? Why not just believe that with God all things are possible? Jesus said, **"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master"** (Matt. 10:24-25). We can be like Jesus. He is making us like Himself.

Therefore, our goal and our aim should be perfection. **"... let us go on unto perfection"** (Heb. 6:1). **"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in**

heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). We are to desire and see our aim fulfilled. We don't have to aim for IMPERFECTION. That is already with us.

2
Must We Sin Daily?

I used to take archery. I would get out on the range, and the bull's-eye looked so far away. It had a stack of hay behind the target. I thought I'd just kind of aim for the hay and let it fly, knowing I could never hit the bull's-eye. Sure enough, I was never disappointed. I never hit the bull's-eye. The instructor came along and said, "You are not even aiming for the bull's-eye!"

"I can hardly see it, let alone aim for it."

"You'll never hit it unless you aim for it," he said.

"Even if I aimed for it, I wouldn't hit it," I replied.

He said, "Go ahead, aim for it. Even if you don't hit it, you'll hit closer to it than if you would not have aimed." And he was right.

We should aim for the bull's-eye. Long enough we've excused ourselves saying, "I'm human." We believe for the supernatural *ability* of God to work in us. Why not believe for the supernatural *character* of our Father?

The Greek word for SIN is *harmartano,* which means: to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize). Many are missing the mark. We're missing the bull's-eye. We are sinning because we are not taking proper aim. We think we can never be perfect, can never live a holy life, and never be like Jesus. 1 John 4:17 says, **"... as he is, so are we in this world."** Jesus is perfect, and as He is so are we to be IN THIS WORLD. We must look at Him.

Some say that this perfection is just POSITIONAL, that

it is a legal standing and that it is not an actual impartation. Consider Hebrews 12:14. Why would the Holy Spirit inspire the writer of Hebrews to write the people who were born again and advocate that there is a limit to how much you can be like Jesus? This would be a contradiction to the admonition: **"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"** (12:14). If we could not obtain more of His holiness He would not instruct us to follow after it.

Holiness is the state of purity: follow holiness. God wouldn't tell us to follow something of which we could not obtain more. In fact, the more you follow holiness the more you'll get. There are Christians who are in a state of holiness to a greater degree than other Christians. And with them God is more "well pleased." Their actual STATE is rising to the level of their legal STANDING.

The Apostle John writes (1 John 2:1): **"My little children, these things write I unto you, THAT YE SIN NOT."** Now if he were as some preachers today he would say, "I'm writing these things unto you that ye sin less. Sin less and less and less. Of course, you'll never be perfect, you are going to keep on sinning until Jesus comes." However, the Scripture puts the goal before us "to sin not." That is my goal. That is my aim, that is my bull's-eye: to be like Jesus. It is said of Jesus in Hebrews 4:15, **"but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet WITHOUT SIN."**

"These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." NOT means to cease from. Now if it was unavoidable to sin every day in thought, word and deed we would not be told "sin not." The instruction would be an impossibility—it would have to read: "sin less, commit some of the whiter sins and leave off some of the blacker sins." Such foolishness!

Notice the word following: **"And IF any man sin."** If the writer expected them to sin, would he have said "if," or would he have said "when"? If he expected them to sin he would have said WHEN. If God expected us to sin, He would have said through the Holy Spirit through John: "and when you sin." The word "if" is telling us we don't have to sin!

There is no excuse for riotous living.

There is no excuse for drunkenness.

There is no excuse for not living for Jesus.

I've spoken to some on the streets, trying to win them to Jesus and they will say, "Oh, I'm saved," but when I point out that their life is a contradiction to their testimony they reply, "I'm saved by grace."

I reply with Paul, **"The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness."** The grace of God is not an excuse for sin. Grace is our teacher. **"God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"** (Rom. 6:2).

Some people are looking for God to give them a license for sin, but He doesn't give a license for it. He doesn't make excuses for it. He never excuses sin, but He will forgive it.

"That ye sin not" should be our goal. What if we fall short of our goal? **"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."** Thank God for our Advocate!

Some tell that "You are going to sin every day." Does Satan sin every day? Does he sin any more often than every day? Actually every day is as often as it is possible to sin. That is to say, to sin at every possible time, and to teach a Christian that he is going to sin every day is to say he is going to sin just as often as the devil sins, because the devil

sins every day. To teach that is to teach a Christian to be like the devil—headed for hell rather than to be like the Father who is in heaven, for that is teaching the Christian to do something that Satan can't out-do.

"In thought, word and deed." Does Satan sin in thought, word and deed? Yes, he does. But does he sin in any more ways than thought, word and deed? No, he doesn't because those are all the ways there are to sin. So when we teach God's people that they are going to sin every day, we are teaching that they are going to sin as often as the devil does —in thought, word and deed. That's as many ways as it is possible for one to sin. The devil himself can't break that record.

There are only two spiritual kingdoms: the head of the one of light is God, and the head of the one of darkness is Satan. The head of the kingdom of light does not sin.

"You have to, you are going to, and you will sin," say some preachers. But in 1 Peter 2:21 we read:

> **"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that YE SHOULD FOLLOW HIS STEPS: WHO DID NO SIN, neither was guile found in his mouth."**

The first step for a follower of Christ is to follow Him in TO DO NO SIN. Now that doesn't leave excuse for any, does it?

"Sin every day ..." How often does God's Word say? In Luke 1:74, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, is prophesying concerning Christ:

> **"That he would grant unto us, that WE being delivered out of the hand of our enemies MIGHT SERVE HIM without fear, IN HOLINESS, and righteousness before him, ALL THE DAYS OF OUR**

LIFE."

Since God expects us to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives does that give us one day in which it is right to sin?

God hates sin. **"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity"** (Hab. 1:13). God hates sin as much after you are saved as He did before. God hasn't changed. **"For I am the Lord, I change not"** (Mal. 3:6).

God is calling us to a "sin not" life.

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:34 writes:

> **"Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame."**

The admonition is not to awake to righteousness and sin less, but to "sin not." That is: DO NOT SIN.

Some will argue that the verse **"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"** (Matt. 5:48) means "mature." Now if you will place the word "mature" where the Word reads "perfect" it will still mean perfect. Or, you may wish to use the word "complete." "Be ye therefore complete, even as your Father which is in heaven is COMPLETE." In no way can you read into that verse that it in any way means that the Father is imperfect, or that we are to be less than mature, complete, and perfect.

"Well," you say, "I'm not perfect."

Then let's go on, unto perfection (Hebrews 6:1-2). Let's aim for the bull's-eye. Let's try to hit the mark. Sin means to miss the mark. Let's endeavor to hit the bull's-eye, perfection!

Could I possibly Live and Not Sin?

> **"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:22).**

Notice that holiness has an end result. The ultimate purpose of holiness is everlasting life.

In the Greek the word "servant" means "having been enslaved." We were slaves to sin. We couldn't help it. We sinned, we were under the bondage of our taskmaster, Satan, and we had to sin. We were his servants. But now we have become servants of God. Which literally means "slaves of God." We are as much a slave to God now as we were to sin. **"Being then made free from sin, and become servants to God."** We have been freed from the slavery to sin. Now we are bound, we are servants, we are slaves to righteousness. If you can grasp this truth in your spirit you will live much more victoriously. There is one difference: God will never usurp your will or lord His authority over you. You must be a willing servant, slave. The ultimate purpose of your servanthood is to bring forth fruit unto holiness. You are to behave **"as becometh holiness"** (Titus 2:3), and that fruit of holiness produces eternal life. **"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"** (Heb. 12:14).

One time in prayer I asked God, "What is a false doctrine?"

He answered, "Any doctrine that condones sin."

It is a doctrine of Satan to teach Christian people to say, "I can't help it, I'll never be able to do anything but sin every day in thought, word and deed." False doctrine teaches that you can live any way you want as long as

you've accepted Christ and at the time He appears you will be transformed, and you will be translated, regardless of your state because He will cleanse and make you glorious at that time. Some Christian leaders say that Jesus is not presently perfecting or making His Church glorious, but will do that when He comes the second time. Then, like the snap of a finger, He will make His Church glorious. This teaching is not scriptural.

Jesus is now making us glorious in holiness.

Jesus is now purifying our hearts. Matthew 5:8 tells us unless the heart is pure we will not see God.

Jesus is now conforming our soul to His image.

The only thing that will be changed about you when Jesus does appear is your body. This is the meaning of 1 John 3:2, **"... but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."** That is, He will change our bodies and make them like His body. Our spirit, soul AND BODY have to be conformed to His image.

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation" is the kind of grace that saves people. This grace teaches people to live holy, and the people who are saved by grace are the people who live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. ONE CANNOT SIN HABITUALLY KNOWINGLY AND REMAIN IN GOD'S FAVOR. **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"** (Ezek. 18:20).

You may say, "That's Old Testament, I'm living in the time of the New Testament." Look at James 1:15:

> **"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."**

This is not physical, but SPIRITUAL death. **"Do not err, my beloved brethren,"** James warns (1:16). And read what Paul has to say in First Thessalonians 3:13: **"To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."** This is not saying that you can live any way you want to and when Jesus appears suddenly your heart is completely cleansed from sin.

STABLISH means "witness to" or, "confirm." At His appearing He will confirm that your heart is unblameable in holiness by translating and glorifying you. He will witness to it. He will testify to it by His glorifying of your body. Hebrews 9:28 makes this very clear. **"... and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."** At His second appearing, that appearing for those who are watching and praying, He will not be dealing with the removal of sin. He will appear without sin unto salvation for them that look for Him. You see, this hope of Christ's return has a purifying effect on us.

> **"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).**

The hope of Christ's appearing is a purifying hope.

To say that the believer is made completely perfect and holy at the moment he dies physically is to say that your death can make you more perfect than Christ's death—it is

making your death more powerful in removing sin from the life than Christ's death on the cross.

Jesus didn't die to make us perfect when we die. He died to make us perfect while we live!

Called to Perfection

I've been told: "I don't like to hear 'perfection' preached. Just preach Jesus." "Stop preaching so much about being perfect, just preach the Word."

I would ask, "Is Jesus perfect? Is the Word perfect? Is the Holy Ghost perfect? Is God the Father perfect? Is the atonement perfect? Is the PERFECT ONE in us?"

"ONE GOD AND FATHER of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:6). **"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU, except ye be reprobates"** (2 Cor. 13:5). So, unless you are a reprobate, Jesus Christ is in you. 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells us: **"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of THE HOLY GHOST WHICH IS IN YOU, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"** So God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all in your spirit. They are in the third heaven and they are also in me!

Now where three perfects are lined up against one imperfect, who do you think is going to win?

You are no match for God. The God who created the universe, all the planets, the sun, moon and all the stars—you are no problem to Him. He is in you. He is determined that He is going to PERFECT you unto the day of Jesus Christ. **"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it**

until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). God has begun a good work in you and He will perfect it. Don't you think He can make a little finite, puny you perfect?

God the Father is in me and He is perfect.

Jesus Christ is in me and He is perfect.

The Holy Spirit is in me and He is perfect.

I'm the only imperfect part of the package, and the Three in One are making me like Him. I'm becoming perfect. The Three are working in me perfection. I am called to perfection. If in only six days God made everything, just think what He can do for me in a few years!

We are finite persons, but God is infinite.

To be finite is to have a beginning and an ending. There is just so much of us and that's all there is. Everything that is in me is either in my spirit, my soul, or my body. If God can make you perfect in one area such as deliverance, or a habit, or the physical body then He is able to clean up all of it. If God can sanctify you and make you holy in one area why can't He do it in all areas? Has He delivered you from an unclean habit? Is He not able to do much more than that?

In a continuous walk with Him He changes us little by little (line upon line, precept upon precept). **"For who hath despised the day of small things?"** (Zech. 4:10). Each time He changes one part of you He has that much less of you to perfect. There is only so much of you. One day He will complete the perfection.

Most evangelical Christians affirm that God can deliver us in one or more areas of our life, but to teach that we can never arrive at a state of perfection in this earthly life is to teach that we are as infinite and as unlimited and as unending as God.

God is conforming me to the image of His Son, Jesus (Rom. 8:29). He wants me in His likeness. Man was created in the image and likeness of God. The IMAGE is the outer visible form; the LIKENESS is the inner moral life, the attributes that are like God. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden he lost that LIKENESS. We are now being conformed in our soul to Jesus' image so that when He appears we will be found in His likeness. God wants to look upon the earth and see His own reflection in us. He wants us to be so conformed to His image that He will look at us and it be just like a mirror. Then you can say, "Christ in me is the hope of glory!" That is perfection.

You may not have realized it, but, you have been believing in perfection all along, and you have been being sanctified as you said "No" to Satan, to wrong attitudes, wrong motives, and wrong habits.

We know that we are the object of sanctification. **"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"** (1 Thess. 4:7). Uncleanness is anything that is lewd, impure, foul, or demonic. Holiness is a state of purity, it is the nature of God, the nature to which God is calling us. It is an inward call to be like Him.

Evidently there were Christians in the church at Thessalonica who despised this message. Notice what Paul said about them: **"He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit"** (1 Thess. 4:8). Anyone who despises the call to holiness is not despising the messenger, but the Sanctifier. He is not despising the preacher, he is despising God who has also given unto us His Holy Spirit. God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32), and if we despise the dealings of God within us, we are quenching the Holy Spirit. We are disobeying the admonition given in

Ephesians 4:30: **"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."** If we grieve the Holy Spirit we will forfeit His ministry to us.

3
The Cleansing Agents

Who is Our Sanctifier?

The Word of God teaches that God the Father is our sanctifier. **"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James, to them that are SANCTIFIED BY GOD THE FATHER"** (Jude 1). So to despise holiness, is to despise the working of God the Father.

Jesus, also, is our sanctifier. Hebrews 2:11: **"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."** The *Amplified Bible* records it as: **"For both He Who sanctifies—making men holy—and those who are sanctified all have one [Father]."** The same Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also my heavenly Father. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Eph. 1:3). Jesus Christ and I have the same Father. That makes us brothers—He is my elder brother.

Jesus was made perfect through sufferings, through obedience, through chastening. He was made perfect for the firstfruits, the overcomers who are watching and praying, to bring a whole company of those who would be perfect as He, to present them before the Father, after He had first presented them to Himself. **"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."**

Jesus will say, "Father, here is the seed of My travail. Here is the harvest from the world. Father, look them over."

The Father will say, "They look just like You!"

When we are saved it is initially and judicially done that we are again in His image, but that doesn't take away from the fact that God is imparting to us what He has imputed. God is working in us what he has worked out for us. He is putting His nature into our nature, making our behavior comparable to the behavior of Jesus, so that we are able to follow His steps and do no sin.

Hebrews 13:12 also says that JESUS IS OUR SANCTIFIER. **"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."**

The following Scriptures teach that the HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SANCTIFIER: Romans 15:16: **"... that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."** 1 Peter 1:22: **"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit."** 2 Thessalonians 2:13: **"... because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."**

The Cleansing Agents

If we are the objects of sanctification, and God is our sanctifier, what are the sanctifying agents, the sanctifying cleansers?

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all actively engaged in the holiness ministry, just as they are all actively engaged in the healing ministry. **"How GOD anointed JESUS of Nazareth with the HOLY GHOST and with power ..."** (Acts 10:38). God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost **"who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed**

of the devil." They are all three not only actively engaged in the healing ministry, but also all actively engaged in perfecting us.

God the Father is the Originator.

God the Son is the Executor.

God the Holy Spirit is the Administrator.

It is God the Father who has conceived the entire plan of salvation.

It is God the Son who has become the channel, for He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live in righteousness.

God the Holy Spirit quickens us, enables us to mortify the deeds of the flesh that we may live before God.

The BLOOD of Jesus is our cleansing agent.

Hebrews 13:12:

> **"Wherefore Jesus also" [the sanctifier], "that he might sanctify the people" [those who are sanctified] "with his own blood" [the sanctifying agent], "suffered without the gate."**

1 John 1:7: **"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."** The word "cleanseth" is in the present tense-it *cleanses and keeps on cleansing!* "Cleanseth" us from all sin, that is, removes sin from us. It is the blood that is the cleansing agent used when there is impurity present. The blood removes sin from the one who has committed it. That is, you have to have "dirt" on you before the blood can cleanse. Jesus initially redeemed us by His blood, washed us from our sins in His blood. **"Unto him that loved us,**

and washed us from our sins in His blood" (Rev. 1:5). But thereafter He wants to sanctify and cleanse us, to keep us clean by the washing of water by His Word. **"That he might sanctify and cleanse it" [the church] "with the washing of water by the word"** (Eph. 5:26).

We have been redeemed by the blood, and should we stumble and fall into sin, we can go to Him in confession and receive cleansing from that sin through His blood. Sin has to be present in order for the cleansing agent to be effective in removing it. It is true we can come and say, "I've sinned again, I need cleansing; forgive me, I need the blood." But He would rather we go before Him and say, "Thank You for keeping me from sin."

How do we keep from sin? **"THY WORD have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"** (Ps. 119:11). Tie this verse in with Ephesians 5:26: **"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD."** Just as water washes away outward body uncleanness, so the Word will wash you inwardly.

The Word of God is the cleansing agent.

Jesus cleanses us with His blood to remove sin from us, thereafter He sanctifies and cleanses the Church with His Word. He sanctifies us with His blood to make us clean, then He keeps us clean by the washing of His Word. Notice the wording: **"That he might sanctify AND cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."**

When the Word is ministered it has a cleansing effect. **"Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"** (John 15:3). In the Lord's prayer to God the Father, Jesus said, **"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"** (John 17:17); He was saying, Set them

apart, make them clean by Thy Word. **"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth"** (1 Peter 1:22). As you obey the Word through the Spirit you purify your soul.

2 Thessalonians 2:13: **"... God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."** It is the belief of the truth, the truth is the Word (John 17), and by believing the Word the Holy Spirit enables us to walk holy before God.

Rather than having to go before the Lord saying, "Forgive, cleanse," He would that we come before Him and say, "Thank You. Your Word has insulated me from the evil influences in this evil age."

Notice in John 17:11 and 14 that we are in the world, but not of the world. Wherever we are located geographically on the earth, we are not to be influenced by the evil of this present age.

Jesus did not teach that we should ISOLATE ourselves from the world in order to be cleansed for He said, **"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world"** (John 17:15). He did teach that we should INSULATE: **"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"** (John 17:17). When you insulate with the Word you don't have to isolate from the world to keep the evil influence of the world from infecting you.

When I was a little boy living in Arkansas, I walked into the woods and there was a flowing stream. Next to the flowing stream was what I thought looked like gold, or a diamond. It turned out to be a quartz rock with fools gold in it. However, I surmised it was a big diamond with real gold in it.

It was muddy as I picked it up out of the earth. I thought, "Oh, how ugly." I began to wash the rock and I could see a shine coming through. When I had fully washed it I thought, "What a beautiful rock."

This was my secret place, where only I could come. It was only a mile from home, but I wondered if the Indians had ever been there. Since it was my own private place I put my little rock by the trunk of a tree on the bank of that stream. A few days later I came back and wanted to look at my shining rock. Lo and behold, it was dirty. Again I had to wash it for a considerable amount of time before it was clean. I put it back in its place by the tree on the bank. A few days later when I inspected it, it was dirty-again. Finally, one day as I was washing the rock I looked in the middle of the stream and noticed another shining, glistening rock. I picked it up and noted it was already clean. Just like my other rock, it was another diamond with gold in it! (How rich I was!)

I questioned, "This rock is already clean, why don't I have to clean it?" Then I realized it had been getting cleaned all the time. It had been getting washed even when I wasn't there because it was in the water. So I took the rock that I had been washing every time I came to look at and placed it in the water between two big rocks. Thus it was getting washed all the time and I no longer needed to wash it.

Isn't it strange, it's getting washed all the time and yet it is not dirty! And that is the difference between the cleansing of the blood and the washing of the water by the Word.

The blood cleanses us from sin. We get out there in the mud, and when Jesus comes along He has to pick us up and say, "You've sinned again. You are still mine and I want to

cleanse and wash you." But Jesus wants us to get in the water. He wants us to get in the Word. We are preserved from evil through the Word.

If you will meditate in God's Word, if you will treasure God's Word you WON'T succumb to temptation.

How did Jesus overcome temptation? WITH THE WORD OF GOD (See Matthew 4). He overcame just as you and I overcome. He left us the pattern. He is the forerunner of how to be an overcomer: speaking the Word that is in your heart.

I said, "Lord, let Your Word abide in me."

He answered, "It is not GOING to abide in you until you abide in it."

You may be wishing that the Word was in you. The Word is not going to jump into your head someday. You won't get it in you unless you get in it. As you daily meditate, read and study the Scripture, the Word of God has a powerful ability to keep you from sin. The Word of God is your strong safeguard against temptation. Then when temptation comes you will be able to say, "It is written ..."

There is a passage in Ephesians 5:25-27 that lets us see the whole picture of what we have been writing about:

> **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"**

[Jesus gave himself for us at the cross, shed His blood, redeemed us].

Jesus gave Himself for the Church. Why? **"That he might sanctify and cleanse it."** How? **"With the washing of water by the word."** This explains WHAT He did and WHY He did it.

"That he might present it to himself a glorious

church." You see, we will be glorious in holiness, **"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."**

Wouldn't you like Him to say that of you: a glorious Christian, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing?

This is something that will be done collectively only as it is done individually. Only as we individually consecrate ourselves to God, separate ourselves to God through the Word, will we collectively become that glorious church.

About the Author

Although born in a minister's home David rejected the Gospel in his early teens and rebelled against the lordship of Christ.

By the age of 15 he was involved in many forms of sin and soon found himself at the point of self-destruction.

In his despair the Lord mercifully drew David to the Cross and saved him on November 30, 1969.

In the six months following his re-birth David read the Bible from cover to cover several times. This led to a deeper knowledge of the Lord than he had been taught growing up in church.

At the age of 17 he entered into a full-time preaching and writing ministry. He has traveled widely and his messages in print have gone all over the world and into several languages. Hundreds of thousands of people have been edified through the literature ministry.

All of this has happened solely through the grace of God.

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Although raised in a Christian home, David Alsobrook turned from the Lord at an early age and went into karate, yoga, transcendental meditation, and drugs. He was gloriously saved in 1969 and filled with the Holy Spirit in 1970. In February 1972, David Alsobrook answered the call of God to go into an evangelistic and teaching ministry. He has written 25 books, of which almost three million copies have gone out from his ministry. He and his wife, Dianne, have two daughters, Ashley and Kimberly. They reside in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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